can avail the fund for brand imaging their products abroad; and

(c) whether such 'Brand Equity Fund' will also be made available to Indian entrepreneurs to enhance their brand equity within the country, so that they can develop a muscle to complete in other countries?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) India Brand Equity Fund (IBEF) managed by a Board of Trustees has been formally launched on 18.2.1999, to project India as a reliable supplier of world class quality goods & services and to make the 'Made in India' label a symbol of quality, reliability and service to the customer. Assistance for brand promotion will be sanctioned in the form of a loan by the Board of Trustees depending upon the merits of each case. IBEF will extend support to particular brands which have achieved world class quality and performance standards and will also support domestic awareness programmes for creation of country wide awareness of the global imperative for quality and high business ethics.

Fixation of floor price for import of steel

1273. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the DGFT has fixed the floor price for import of Steel which is higher than the actual international price of Steel; and

(b) what are Government's views on this?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Government has notified floor prices in respect of certain steel items to restrict their cheap imports into the country. This was necessitated due to the fact that the imports of steel at very low prices from CIS countries and some South East Asian countries in bulk quantities were causing serious threat to the indigenous steel industry by depressing prices to unremunerative levels. The floor prices were fixed on the basis of average Cost Insurance and Freight (CIF) prices from sources such as Europe & Japan. The floor prices are subject to revision from time to time based upon the trend of international prices.

Foreign tea being sold as Indian tea

1274. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India produces less than nine million kgs. of tea a year;

(b) whether the world tea market registers 45 million kgs. as "Darjeeling tea";

(c) what steps have been taken to stop inferior foreign tea being palmed off as good Indian tea;

(d) whether import licences have been given for tea against commitments of export;

(e) how far these commitments have been honoured; and

(f) the net loss/gain of foreign exchange?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) The production of tea in India during 1998 was 870 m. kg including 10.73 m. kg of Darjeeling tea. Nearly 80% of tea produced in Darjeeling plantation districts is exported. Tea is exported mainly in blended form either in bulk or in packets. In this process, origin of tea is lost at the time of blending and hence export of tea by origin of production cannot be ascertained. According to the trade information a sizable quantity of tea not produced in the plantation districts of Darjeeling is sold in the international market as Darjeeling Tea.

(c) Tea Board has introduced a Tea Marketing Symbol as a certification mark for 100% Indian Tea for use on packets/ Tea Bags/Chestls etc. for the purpose of